

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 SCS-06 SS-15 SP-02 CU-04 EB-08
PRS-01 INR-07 /059 W
-----112696 011812Z /41
R 010846Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6612

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 00759

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: CGEN, CPRS, PGOV, SCUL, GE, US
SUBJECT: FEININGER PAINTINGS AND US-GDR RELATIONS

REF: STATE 18351

1. POLOFF CALLED US DESK OFFICER (ELM) AT MFA ON JANUARY 30 AND MADE POINTS CONTINUED PARA 5 REFTEL. ELM INDICATED HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE ISSUE BUT GAVE NO ANSWER. HE PROMISED TO INFORM THE EMBASSY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE DID NOT RAISE QUESTION OF ANY CLAIMS BEING FILED WITH USFCSC.
2. AFTER EMBOFF HAD MADE POINTS ABOVE, INCLUDING COMMENT THAT RETURN OF PAINTINGS WOULD GENERATE FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR THE GDR, ELM OBSERVED THAT BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCE IN WASHINGTON, CLIMATE WAS IMPORTANT FOR OTHER THINGS BESIDES CROPS. THE INFERENCE WAS CLEARLY THAT THE US-GDR BILATERAL CLIMATE WAS NOT AS GOOD AS IT SHOULD BE. ELM THEN OBSERVED THAT SOME PEOPLE (NOT IDENTIFIED) REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE SOME OTHER ISSUES OUTSTANDING, MENTIONING SPECIFICALLY THE DURER PAINTINGS IN THE US WHICH THE GDR CLAIMS. THE POLOFF POINTED OUT THAT THE FACTS IN THE TWO CASES WERE ENTIRELY
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DIFFERENT.

3. ELM THEN PROCEEDED TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT DELAYS IN MAKING THE INDEMNITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DRESDEN ART EXHIBIT IN WASHINGTON. HE SAID CERTAIN PEOPLE, AGAIN UNNAMED, WERE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT WAS BEHIND THE DELAY. COMPLEX ARRANGEMENTS COULD

NOT, BE CONTINUED, BE STARTED AND STOPPED LIKE THIS.
POLOFF ASSURED ELM THAT ALL PERSONS WITH
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EXHIBIT HERE AND IN WASHINGTON
WERE WORKING TO MAKE THE EXHIBIT A SUCCESS AND WERE
OPTIMISTIC THAT TECHNICAL PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED.

4. COMMENT: ELM APPEARED TO BE GENUINELY CONCERNED
ABOUT THE DRESDEN ISSUE SUGGESTING THAT SOME GDR
OFFICIALS THOUGHT WASHINGTON WAS ATTEMPTING
TO CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. POLOFF HAD
THE IMPRESSION THAT ELM ALSO HAD OTHER BILATERAL
ISSUES IN MIND. IT IS NOT CLEAR FROM ELM'S REMARKS
WHETHER SOME IN THE GDR ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING
LINKING RELEASE OF THE FEININGER PAINTINGS TO A
SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF THE DURER PAINTING QUESTION.
END COMMENT. BOLEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BERLIN00759
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780048-0624
Format: TEL
From: BERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197802108/aaaadnlk.tel
Line Count: 78
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 517b08ce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 18351
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3447746
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FEININGER PAINTINGS AND US-GDR RELATIONS
TAGS: CGEN, CPRS, PGOV, SCUL, GC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/517b08ce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014